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Thursday, 15 June 2006, 11.05 a.m.

New York

President:	Ms. Løj	(Denmark)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. García Moritán
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Mr. Gallardo
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Mr. Bolton

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004) (S/2006/360)

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06-38901 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004) (S/2006/360)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Iraq in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Zebari (Iraq) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: On behalf of the members of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Hoshyar Zebari, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Angela Kane, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004), document S/2006/360.

Members of the Council also have before them photocopies of a letter dated 12 June 2006 from the Secretary-General, transmitting letters concerning the International Advisory and Monitoring Board. This letter and its enclosures will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2006/394.

I wish to draw the attention of members to document S/2006/377, which contains a letter dated 9 June 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq addressed to the President of the Security Council.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Ms. Angela Kane, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and by His Excellency Mr. John Bolton, representative of the United States, on behalf of the multinational force.

I now give the floor to Ms. Angela Kane, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

Ms. Kane: The report of the Secretary-General before the Council details the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) from 8 March to 2 June 2006, based on its mandate under resolution 1546 (2004). I am pleased to brief the Council today on the activities of UNAMI under the leadership of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi.

During the past months, the Government formation process was at the centre of political attention in Iraq. Following the election for a new parliament on 15 December 2005, Iraq's political leaders engaged in a period of extensive and complex negotiations, which culminated on 20 May in the formation of the first constitutionally elected Government led by Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki. Differences of view within and among the political blocs delayed three ministerial appointments. Following further negotiations, this process was completed on 8 June with the confirmation of the Ministers of Defence, Interior and National Security.

Through this process, Iraq's political leaders have shown that they can rise to the challenge of dialogue and compromise with a view to forming an inclusive and democratic Government, despite difficult overall circumstances. This is all the more remarkable given the serious deterioration of the security situation following the Samarra bombing in February 2006.

Of particular concern is the mounting loss of civilian life as a result of insecurity, high levels of violence and a breakdown in law and order. It appears that intercommunal violence and criminal activities have compounded insurgent violence as threats to

national security and stability. Among the most affected provinces were Baghdad, Ninewa, Salahuddin, Anbar and, more recently, Diyala and Basra. In Basra, the Government declared a month-long state of emergency on 31 May and reinforced its security presence. Ta'mim — mostly the city of Kirkuk — also witnessed a growing number of violent incidents.

While the United Nations does not have precise information about the numbers and breakdown of the victims and perpetrators of violence, UNAMI concluded in its latest bimonthly human rights report that "hundreds of civilians are reported killed or wounded weekly, including women and children, as targeted or unintended victims of violent attacks".

The Secretary-General's report emphasizes that March 2006 was the fourth most deadly month since May 2003, with twice as many Iraqis killed as in December 2005. In Baghdad, the Medico-Legal Institute recently confirmed that more than 6,000 bodies were received in the first five months of 2006 alone. These are indeed gruesome figures. Targeted assassinations, including attacks against prominent politicians and their relatives, intimidation, threats and kidnappings appear to be aimed directly at provoking sectarian strife, lawlessness and ungovernability, as well as a general atmosphere of fear and the loss of public trust in the authorities. This violence has led to an increase in internal displacement. Since late February more than 100,000 people have been displaced, adding up to a total of approximately 1.3 million internally displaced persons country-wide.

It is encouraging that immediately upon taking office Prime Minister Al-Maliki expressed his commitment to improve the security situation and promote national reconciliation as his key priorities. His new Government must now be empowered to enable it to heal political and social divisions through dialogue and confidence-building, to strengthen democratic institutions and the rule of law and to improve the living conditions for all Iraqis. This approach offers the best prospects for ensuring that the political process impacts positively on the security situation. A promised review of anti-terror and de-Baathification legislation will help to shape a more conducive environment for national reconciliation.

However, achieving positive results in all these areas will require time. At the outset, the effectiveness of the new Government will largely be defined by its ability to inspire the confidence of the Iraqi people by taking immediate measures to improve security.

First and foremost, this will require the new Government to gradually take full ownership of its national affairs, including in the vital area of security, assisted, as necessary, by the international community. Efforts by the Multinational Force to speed up the training and equipping of the Iraqi security forces remain indispensable in this regard. A determined effort is also needed to control militias and other unauthorized armed forces with a view to re-establishing a State monopoly on weapons. The United Nations welcomes Prime Minister Al-Maliki's expressed commitment to this issue.

In addition, in tackling violence, both the Iraqi security forces and the Multinational Force have a particular responsibility to act in full accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law. Notwithstanding their efforts to address Iraq's security challenges, the United Nations is deeply concerned about reported violations of those standards and urges the Iraqi security forces, as well as the Multinational Force to ensure full, transparent and effective investigations of all such incidents to prevent their recurrence.

Furthermore, the United Nations hopes that the new Government will make it a priority to set a robust human rights agenda that addresses both past and current human rights violations and includes the establishment of an independent national human rights commission and a centre for missing and disappeared persons. A robust human rights protection mechanism must include investigating all allegations of human rights violations and bringing perpetrators to justice in order to prevent the development of a culture of impunity.

In this context, the United Nations remains concerned about the large number of detainees held in detention centres country-wide without investigation or criminal charges. While we welcome the announcement by the new Government to release 2,500 detainees — on 7 June an initial group of approximately 600 detainees was released — more needs to be done to find constructive solutions to this issue, including the release of the investigation into the illegal detention centre of Al-Jadiriya and of other investigations carried out by the Government on this issue.

In addition to security measures, the new Government will have to take broader measures with the ultimate aim of promoting national reconciliation. Although the new Government bears primary responsibility in this regard, regional countries and the wider international community can play an important role in support of its efforts. The following steps at the national, regional and international level might be considered.

At the national level, it is not just the responsibility of the Government, but of all Iraqi political, social and religious leaders to eschew the politics of sectarianism, hatred and violence, in which everybody ultimately stands to lose, and instead embrace dialogue, compromise and intercommunal harmony in the larger national interest, in which all stand to gain. Through their increasing active participation in Iraq's democratic process, the vast majority of Iraqis have demonstrated time and again that, despite severe provocations, they reject the politics of extremism pursued by a few and are determined to resolve their differences peacefully.

This demonstrates that Iraq has a strong foundation for national reconciliation. Three main elements are needed to succeed. The first is an inclusive political process that is responsive to the needs of all Iraqi constituencies. The second is the political will by all Iraqi leaders to work towards this end, and the third element is effective mechanisms to promote dialogue and consensus-building. The review of the constitution that was agreed upon last year by Iraq's political leaders could be an effective vehicle for advancing the process of national reconciliation, including for reaching a national consensus on a strong framework for the Iraqi State. The constitution provides for the early establishment of a constitutional review committee of the new parliament. The United Nations hopes that the new parliament will address this issue as a matter of priority and remain fully committed to providing continued assistance through UNAMI's Office of Constitutional Support in Baghdad.

The new parliament will also be required to form specialized committees on important issues such as the adoption of an electoral law and the establishment of a new independent high electoral commission. These will be fundamental steps for ensuring effective preparations for future electoral events, such as the planned governorate council and municipal elections. UNAMI also stands ready to continue its support role in this important area.

At the regional level, the League of Arab States is planning to convene a conference on Iraqi national accord. Such a forum could serve to encourage dialogue and consensus among different Iraqi political groups and thus contribute to national reconciliation. Special Representative Qazi and UNAMI are working closely with the League of Arab States on the preparations for that conference — now scheduled for August — in follow-up to the November 2005 Cairo conference. Thorough preparations ensuring broadly and truly representative Iraqi participation and effective follow-up will be an important element for the success of the conference.

At the international level, there is now an opportunity to build a deeper consensus in support of Iraq's transition, including in the Security Council. In addition to fulfilling existing pledges and increasing the levels of debt forgiveness, support for reconstruction and foreign investment and an Iraqi-led framework for mobilizing new and additional international assistance for Iraq that has the broadest possible support from the international community should be considered as a matter of priority. For its part, UNAMI and the country team have continued to support the new Government in establishing effective, transparent and accountable public institutions, providing access to basic services and restoring public infrastructure. UNAMI has also maintained its leading role in donor coordination. We look forward to discussing our future support role in this area in the context of the priorities of the new national development strategy.

As noted in the Secretary-General's report, the Organization's presence and ability to operate effectively in Iraq remain severely constrained by the security environment. To provide United Nations staff with the best security possible, and therefore continue to maintain a presence in Iraq, a number of mitigating and protective measures are in place. The development of an integrated long-term United Nations complex in Baghdad has continued, and new premises in Erbil and Basra have now been completed. For the foreseeable future, the United Nations will continue to rely on the Multinational Force for static and movement protection.

With respect to dedicated air assets, we very much welcome the decision by Denmark to offer UNAMI a dedicated aircraft, and look forward to discussions on the implementation arrangements of that offer.

We are also grateful to all other Member States that, in a variety of roles, support the work of the United Nations in Iraq from its bases inside the country, as well as in Jordan and Kuwait.

The United Nations remains fully committed, circumstances permitting, to implement its mandate under resolution 1546 (2004). Special Representative Qazi and his team stand ready to render their good offices and provide political facilitation to the new Government, with a view to promoting dialogue and national reconciliation. In addition, we intend to strengthen our activities in other key areas of our mandate, particularly concerning reconstruction and development. We look forward to a comprehensive and sustained dialogue with the new Government to explore how we can best fulfil our mandate within the prevailing circumstances.

In conclusion, with the establishment of the first constitutionally elected Government, Iraq's political transition, set forth in the Transitional Administrative Law endorsed by resolution 1546 (2004), has been completed. Over the past three years, Iraq's transition has moved successfully from the Governing Council to the Interim Government and the Transitional Government. That culminated, in December 2005, in Iraq's first elections for a constitutionally elected Government. During that process the Iraqi people showed great courage in participating in two elections and one constitutional referendum, under very difficult circumstances. These are important accomplishments that have laid the foundations for Iraq's democratic future, which need to be sustained with the full support of the international community.

That successful political transition, however, has been accompanied by continued instability, violence and gross violations of fundamental human rights by all sides. While it may be understandable that, due to their transitory character, previous Governments were unable to take some of the hard decisions required to address the urgent needs of the Iraqi people, the establishment of a constitutionally elected Government for a full four-year term offers new hope.

Throughout their long history, the people of Iraq have demonstrated that they have all the necessary human, financial and natural capital to succeed. The key to success remains finding lasting inclusive political solutions to Iraq's most pressing challenges within an overall framework of national reconciliation. The United Nations remains committed to playing its part in that endeavour.

The President: I thank Assistant Secretary-General Kane for her briefing.

Mr. Bolton (United States of America): As requested by Security Council resolutions 1546 (2004) and 1637 (2005), I am pleased to report to the Security Council on behalf of the 29 countries making up the Multinational Force (MNF) on the Force's progress towards fulfilling its mandate.

This reporting period has borne witness to a striking development. On 7 June, MNF and Iraqi forces killed Al-Qaida in Iraq terrorist leader Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi and one of his key associates, Sheikh Abd Al-Rahman, in an air strike against an identified isolated safehouse. Tips and intelligence from Al-Zarqawi's own network led forces to Al-Zarqawi and several of his associates, who were conducting a meeting. Although the original leader of Al-Qaida in Iraq is now dead, he has been replaced, and the terrorist organization still poses a threat, as its members will continue to attempt to intimidate the Iraqi people and threaten the Iraqi Government as it moves towards greater stability and prosperity.

The Iraqi people overwhelmingly reject violence as a means to drive political change. The international community continues to stand with the people of Iraq in their determined drive for a secure, stable and democratic country. We honour the memory and sacrifice of all who have lost their lives in the struggle for a federal, democratic, pluralistic and unified Iraq.

There have been historic developments since our last report, some of them unfolding even as we meet today. Iraq's leaders and the Iraqi people reached a critical milestone in Iraq's political development on 22 April, when Iraqi political leaders announced the selection of senior members of a new Government, including the Prime Minister-designate, President, two Deputy Presidents and Speaker of the Council of Representatives. That key event was followed on 20 May by the approval by the Council of Representatives of nearly all of Prime Minister

Maliki's Cabinet. The final three ministers were approved on 8 June. Prime Minister Maliki and his Council of Ministers brought into office with them the hopes of all Iraqis, as well as the good wishes of the international community. So significant was the combination of forming a fully democratic Government and the well-deserved end of Al-Zarqawi that President Bush this week visited Baghdad to demonstrate our commitment to those who support peace and democracy and oppose the terrorists.

The extremists and terrorists remain capable of, and intent on, carrying out attacks against Iraqi civilians, officials and security forces, with the goal of destabilizing the legitimately elected Government of Iraq and denying the Iraqi people the democracy that they have chosen through free and fair elections.

During this period more than 81 per cent of attacks were concentrated in four of Iraq's 18 provinces — Baghdad, Al Anbar, Salah ad Din and Ninawa. Since our last report, Diyala province and Ninawa province were among the four most attack-prone provinces. Twelve provinces, containing more than 50 per cent of the population, experienced only 6 per cent of all attacks. Nine provinces have averaged one or no attacks per day since February.

In addition to the threat from terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida in Iraq, militias and other groups continue to challenge the rule of law at the local and regional levels. Attacks on Iraq's infrastructure continue to adversely affect oil revenues and the availability of electricity. However, the number of infrastructure attacks has declined since August 2005, suggesting that efforts by the MNF and the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to secure Iraq's infrastructure are meeting with some success. The Multinational Force will continue to work with the Iraqi Government and other international partners to strengthen further infrastructure security.

The Iraqi Security Forces continue to grow, improve and conduct more and more independent operations each day. Multinational Forces continue to train, mentor and equip the ISF and to hand over battle responsibilities to Iraqi forces as proficiency allows and conditions permit. Transfers are evaluated area by area and region by region, and are incremental to ensure an effective and successful handover of security responsibilities.

As of 29 May, 111 Iraqi army, strategic infrastructure and special operations battalions are conducting counter-insurgency operations. Seventy-one of those battalions are operating in the lead with coalition support and several are operating independently. All 28 Iraqi National Police battalions are operational, with two of those battalions also operating in the lead with coalition support. Iraqi Security Forces assuming security and control of their own areas of responsibility increased to two division headquarters, 16 brigade headquarters and 63 battalions. Those areas include more than 30,000 square miles of Iraq. By the end of the summer, 75 per cent of Iraqi brigades and battalions will be leading counter-insurgency operations with coalition support.

A strong Iraqi Security Force presence continues in Baghdad. Iraqi forces now total over 265,000 Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior personnel trained and equipped for counter-insurgency operations. That includes over 117,000 Ministry of Defence personnel, over 103,000 police and over 45,000 other Ministry of Interior forces.

Recent examples of how Iraqi Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior forces are progressing in the ability to provide security to the Iraqi people include the following. In late March, 196 Iraqi police officers, known as the sons of Al Anbar, successfully graduated from the Baghdad police academy. Upon their return to Ramadi, where they protect the people of their home province, they were enthusiastically greeted by Iraqi and multinational forces. "We are the future of Iraq, each and every one of us", proclaimed one new graduate. "We will make a difference for our sons and daughters."

In April, the 1st Brigade, 4th Iraqi Army Division, began the first phase of assuming responsibility for security in Salah ad Din province. The event was commemorated with a ceremony attended by Multinational Force and Iraqi officials. The 1st Brigade has progressively taken a larger role in security for the province by assuming responsibility for security in residential areas including Samarra and Tikrit.

In April, soldiers from the 4th Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 8th Iraqi Army Division conducted Operation Cobra Strike with MNF forces. Cobra Strike was a mission to locate the suspected leader and financier of a terrorist cell working in the

area. Iraqi leadership planned the scheme of manoeuvres for the operation. MNF forces were on hand in an advisory role.

In May, the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 3rd Iraqi Army Division assumed the lead in security operations in and around Sinjar, in western Ninawa province, marking another example of the steadily-increasing Iraqi army role in providing security to the people of Iraq.

In May, the first class of 20 Iraqi soldiers graduated from the Iraqi army basic medical course, certifying them as Iraqi medics who will serve with the Iraqi military throughout western Al Anbar province. The goal is to have 150 trained Iraqi medics by year's end to serve with the army, partnered with the MNF forces throughout the province.

United Nations contributions are vital. We urge the United Nations to continue to fulfil its mandate under Security Council resolution 1546 (2004). Considerable work remains. We look forward to UNAMI's expansion of its presence in Iraq, especially to Basra and Erbil.

The Multinational Force, notably the Georgian, Romanian and South Korean contingents, continues to provide security for the United Nations in Baghdad, Basra and Erbil, respectively. The troops provide static site security, reconnaissance, security patrols, convoy escorts, checkpoints and when necessary, MEDEVAC and emergency evacuation. Also, Fijian troops provide static and close-in protection for United Nations personnel and facilities in Baghdad.

The measure of success will be the dawn of the day when the Iraqi people are fully able to secure their own safety, freedom and prosperity. Training Iraqi security forces to assume primary responsibility for security is essential. The completion of the Government formation process under the popularly-ratified constitution heralds the beginning of a new era in Iraq's history. Prime Minister Maliki's Government faces great challenges. We hope that he will work to promote national dialogue and inclusion, as well as to strive tirelessly to deliver improvements in security, stability and quality of life to the Iraqi people.

The international community and Iraq's neighbours, especially Syria and Iran, must do more to stop foreign fighters from entering Iraq. Additionally, they must do more to answer the Security Council's call in resolution 1546 (2004) to end material and financial support for individuals and groups that oppose the new legitimate Iraqi Government. Moreover, we call upon the entire international community to support Iraq's sovereign Government and to redouble its assistance efforts.

In conclusion, the MNF and combined MNF-ISF operations continue to provide the security necessary for Iraq's new democratically elected constitutional Government to succeed. We are pleased to note Foreign Minister Zebari's 9 June letter (S/2006/377, annex) to the Security Council, expressing the Iraqi Government's support for the MNF's continued role in providing for security and stability in Iraq. The MNF remains committed to its responsibilities and to achieving ultimate success.

The President: I thank Mr. Bolton for his briefing.

I invite His Excellency, Mr. Hoshyar Zebari, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq to take the floor.

Mr. Zebari (Iraq): I thank the members of the Security Council for allowing me the privilege of addressing the Council today. In accordance with Security Council resolution 1637 (2005), and pursuant to Iraq's request in a letter to the Security Council dated 27 October 2005 (S/2005/687, annex), the mandate of the Multinational Force in Iraq is now due for review.

Over the previous 12 months, despite formidable challenges, the people of Iraq have realized historic progress towards a pluralistic, federal and united democracy. The Transitional National Assembly drafted a new permanent constitution, which was successfully ratified through public referendum on 15 October 2005. In December, over 70 per cent of the eligible electorate voted for Iraq's first constitutional Government, in the third internationally approved election of 2005. This inspiring exercise of our democratic rights is a credit to the determination and courage of the Iraqi people to secure their future and their country.

Our first permanent national unity Government has now assumed office for a four-year term in accordance with the constitution, and is held accountable by the 275 men and women of the freely elected Council of Representatives. These achievements mark the completion of our timely

compliance with our obligations under the political process mandated in Iraq's transitional administrative law and endorsed in resolution 1546 (2004).

However, as we have enjoyed this political progress, a difficult and destructive security situation persists. We continue to fight an insurgency, crime, incidents of sectarian violence and foreign terrorists trying to incite civil war and prevent the consolidation of our democratic gains. The continued cooperation between Iraqi forces and the Multinational Force remains necessary for our security and critical to attaining the goal of self-sufficiency in defending our country and securing peace.

In reference to my letter to the President of the Security Council of 9 June (S/2006/377, annex), the Government of Iraq therefore requests, and welcomes, the continued presence of the Multinational Force in our country. We thank those forces, and the coalition countries, for their vital contribution and commitment to the people of Iraq.

With the formation of a new full-term Government, and the recent elimination of the most notorious terrorist, Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, who was responsible for the bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad in August 2003, we sense a great momentum among the Iraqi people and a very real chance to turn our situation around.

But we remain realistic. We do not underestimate the challenge of getting a tight grip on the insurgency and uniting the country behind the new Government. Our agenda includes security as our immediate priority and the critical prerequisite to progress on national reconciliation, Government performance and economic development. In cooperation with the MNF, NATO training missions and protection forces of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), we are building up the capacity, training, professionalism and equipment of Iraqi forces. We share the same end goal as our coalition allies: for our forces to reach self-sufficiency as soon as possible so that the multinational troops can return home with our great gratitude.

Volunteer recruits represent a cross-section of Iraqi society under the banner of Iraqi national identity. The Government of Iraq, as the sole legitimate administrator of armed forces, will activate its policy to demobilize militia members and integrate them into society.

Our forces are gradually assuming responsibility for significant areas of the country and are leading independent offensive operations with visible success. As the ongoing process of handing over security responsibilities from the MNF to Iraqi forces continues, more provinces will come under our control. Eliminating Zarqawi was a major blow to the Al-Qaida terrorist network and a victory for the MNF and the Iraqi forces and people, and for our intelligence gathering operations, a key weapon in the fight against terror networks and insurgency. As I speak today, a large security operation is under way in Baghdad, conducted jointly by Iraqi forces and the Multinational Force, to secure the political and economic heart of Iraq. This security plan will be extended to the rest of the country.

My Government understands that security operations must go hand in hand with a series of initiatives to promote national consensus, tolerance, justice and respect for human rights. Already our Government has, in a goodwill gesture of amnesty, released hundreds of detainees and prisoners. We continue to pursue political dialogue to broaden the political process. Despite intimidation, Sunni leaders joined us at the negotiating table. Last year, they boycotted elections; today they are an essential part of the national unity Government and hold top cabinet positions.

Recently, Iraq and the Arab League jointly agreed to hold a reconciliation conference in Baghdad in early August. Under this umbrella, all those who believe in the political process and who are ready to abandon terrorism and violence as a means to an end will have the opportunity to participate, along with other Arab countries, a number of other friendly countries and the United Nations.

Contrary to media portrayals and despite the terrorist tactics, civil war is not taking place in Iraq. However, there are increased incidents of sectarian violence. But Iraqis have a long history of peaceful coexistence. We have explicitly rejected attempts to stoke sectarian strife by exercising remarkable unity and restraint and by voting for a sovereign National Unity Government. That Government is broadly representative of, and is governing by the consent of, Iraq's multiethnic religious and political society. It assumes its legitimacy and authority from the constitution, which itself is a product of an inclusive process of consultation and compromise.

Our next political challenge is the review of the constitution within agreed mechanisms stipulated in its charter. Successfully identifying necessary revisions and accommodating competing interests will further strengthen national consensus.

For us to consolidate political stability we must also expedite socio-economic development and reconstruction. My Government is acting fast to restore public confidence by giving high priority to the provision of basic services and strengthening the Commission for Public Integrity to eradicate corruption and improve accountability. We are undertaking broad ministerial reform, capacity-building and modernizing of institutions within a core framework of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. At the same time, we plan to accelerate the pace of reconstruction and lay the foundations of a sustainable economy to generate employment, stimulate the private sector and capitalize on Iraq's wealth of natural resources. Whereas over the previous three years development has been frustrated, mainly by lack of security but also by transnational administration, we can now benefit from continuity in long-term planning in line with Iraq's national development strategy. As the mandates of the Development Fund for Iraq (DFI) and of the International Advisory and Monitoring Board are also due for review, the Government of Iraq proposes to continue the present arrangements according to resolution 1637 (2005). These bodies play a crucial role in promoting transparency in the disbursements of Iraq's resources for the benefit of the Iraqi people.

We also note the support of UNAMI in the constitutional process, humanitarian assistance, donor coordination and electoral assistance. We ask that the United Nations continue to offer its unique expertise for the forthcoming provincial elections throughout Iraq. We commend the work of the Special Representative, Ambassador Ashraf Qazi, and welcome UNAMI's proposal for the Baghdad peace initiative to help bridge communal differences. We also note the Secretary-General's concerns regarding human rights in his quarterly report to the Security Council. While the primary perpetrators of human rights abuses in Iraq are the insurgents, terrorists and criminals, we as a Government acknowledge our ongoing obligation to uphold and protect human rights as enshrined in our constitution. The Government of Iraq is committed to meeting violations with justice and reaffirms its commitment to establishing an independent human rights commission in Iraq.

We continue to need the United Nations to engage in Iraq to its maximum capacity. We call upon Member States to step up the provision of funds and operational support, and my Government pledges to provide any assistance necessary to enhance the United Nations mission. As security in Iraq improves, we request that the United Nations reinforce its staff and increase its role throughout the country. We must not underestimate the positive impact of a sovereign, united and stable Iraq at the strategic and geographical heart of the Middle East. We have demonstrated that our progress does not contradict the interests of our neighbours. We continue to pursue regional cooperation on economic exchanges, political dialogue and border security in order to promote peaceful coexistence with our neighbours. Furthermore, we expect our neighbours to demonstrate genuine support for the new Government and goodwill in securing borders and preventing arms, foreign elements and terrorists from crossing into Iraq to undermine the stability of the new Government.

We believe that the formation of an international contact group, involving Iraq's neighbours, the five permanent members of the Council, the United Nations and the Arab League, would be a fair and useful means to build international support for regional security and to enhance reconstruction plans for the country.

We would also like to take this opportunity to point out that the time is now ripe for the Security Council to review the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission mandate with a view to terminating it, since the circumstances that led to its creation no longer exist.

The Government of Iraq thanks the United Nations for its expressed support as we begin our challenging mandate. We ask that the international community take this opportunity to revitalize its assistance and support to Iraq and fulfil donor pledges already made at Madrid, Amman and Tokyo so as to help my Government to accomplish its responsibilities to our people.

This is the beginning of a new chapter in Iraq's transformation from dictatorship to a sovereign, peaceful and prosperous federal democracy, as voted for by the Iraqi people. My Government recognizes that we have a critical window of opportunity to break

with the past. The future of the country is up to us, and we are seizing the initiative. We have paid dearly — along with the sacrifices of the sons and daughters of our allies — and we will not let our losses be in vain. The more help we receive now, the sooner we can succeed in our common cause.

The President: The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I should now like to invite Council members to a private meeting to continue our discussion of the item.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.